

Newsela ELA Quizzes are a Robust Indicator of ELA Achievement in Texas

A Newsela validity report

Executive Summary

- Results from a sample of over 1,500 Texas students in grades 3-8 from 7 districts show that scores on Newsela ELA quizzes are strongly correlated with end-of-year ELA achievement. Areas including Dallas-Fort Worth, East Texas, West Texas, and South Texas were represented.
- Students scoring over 75% on Newsela ELA quizzes were more than 2x as likely to achieve projected proficiency.
- Newsela's ELA quizzes are an effective way to monitor student ELA achievement in between standardized assessment administrations.



The best lessons
in Texas start with
the best content.

Background

This study examines how Texas students' performance on Newsela relates to their English Language Arts (ELA) achievement within a single school year. Newsela is a digital instructional content platform offering teachers engaging and relevant texts for their classroom instruction in subjects such as ELA, Social Studies, and Science. Newsela's content library features over 15,000 texts across 20+ genres written at 5 different reading levels as well as fiction stories and multimedia content. In addition to leveled content, Newsela also offers standards-aligned quizzes, writing prompts, and vocabulary-building exercises. Newsela ELA quizzes are composed of 4 or 8 multiple-choice questions, each of which is aligned to state-specific reading standards. In this report, quiz score is defined as percent correct, which is the result of dividing total questions answered correctly by total questions attempted.

ELA achievement was measured using MAP Growth. The NWEA MAP® Growth™ is an online adaptive interim assessment typically taken by students at three points throughout the school year (Fall, Winter, Spring). The analyses presented here focus on the Reading subject test, which covers vocabulary, informational comprehension, and literary comprehension. MAP Growth scores were translated to State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) proficiency categories using a linking study ([NWEA, 2020](#)).



Sample

Data from 1,617 Texas students in grades 3-8 over the course of the 2021 - 2022 school year were examined. The sample included any students who had taken an ELA quiz on the Newsela platform in at least seven distinct months throughout the school year, or about once every month and a half.

Students from seven different school districts were included, spanning the North Texas/DFW, East Texas, South Texas, and West Texas areas. These districts were primarily in suburban or rural areas. The median income of families in the districts sampled ranged from \$45 - 70k. These districts also had a range of racial diversity; some districts had mostly Hispanic/Latinx students while others had a mix of White, Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and Asian students. Thus, the students in the report sample likely reflect a similar level of diversity.

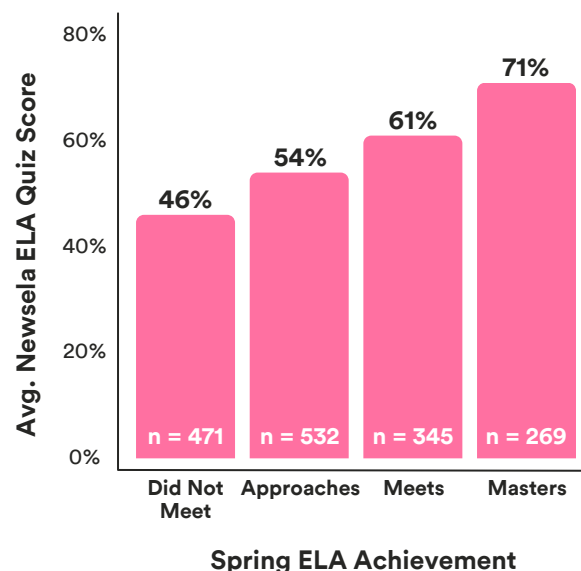
Results

Higher Scores on Newsela Quizzes Linked to Higher ELA Achievement

Students' overall Newsela ELA quiz scores showed a strong positive and statistically significant correlation with their spring MAP Growth achievement, even after taking into account how they scored in the fall. In other words, students who scored highly on Newsela quizzes also showed high ELA achievement at the end of the year. In fact, students who scored over 75% on Newsela ELA quizzes were more than twice as likely to achieve end-of-year ELA proficiency than lower-scoring peers. Across Newsela, students tend to answer about 60% of ELA quiz questions correctly. Students reaching a Masters level of performance showed average quiz scores of around 71%, considerably exceeding the Newsela average. This means that teachers can use Newsela's ELA quizzes as effective low-stakes indicators of student ELA achievement in between benchmark assessment administrations.

Newsela Quizzes: An Effective Formative Assessment in Texas

Students with higher Newsela ELA quiz scores also score higher on end-of-year assessments.



1 $r(9624) = 0.53, p < .001$. After accounting for Fall MAP percentile, the correlation is 0.21; $r(9624) = 0.21, p < .001$.

2 Correlation effect sizes: 0.10 - 0.29 = small; 0.30 - 0.49 = medium; 0.50+ = large (Cohen, 1992).